NATIONAL CAPITAL AFFAIRS

Uncle Sam's Lights That Signal Storm Warnings

WASHINGTON.—Uncle Sam's lighthouse service is not the only one of his agencies that display lights at night for the information and welfare of the mariner. Whenever a storm is brewing along the coasts or over the inland waterways colored lights twinkle forth from hundreds of special storm-warning stations of the weather bureau, combined in such a way as to furnish navigators with specific information that will forearm them.

One interesting fact is that the mushroomlike growth of many lake ports, bringing into existence cities with their myriads of lights, obscured numbers of the stations that when established were the most outstanding features of the night view. In such cases the stations are being relocated at points easily seen by the officers of approaching or passing ships. The new stations are being installed in tall, specially constructed steel towers, dozens of which are being erected along the shores of the five lakes and their connecting waterways.

The taller towers will make possible the establishment of the new signal system in which three lights, one above the other, will be used instead of the two lights in a vertical plane heretofore employed.

The new system was worked out after experiments carried on by the instrument experts of the weather bureau on the Potomac below Washington under various weather conditions. These experiments brought out the fact that lights, to be seen by the naked eye as separate bright objects, must be approximately four feet apart for each mile the observer is distant. This information was made use of in designing the new towers and in arranging the placement of the signal lamps. At the same time the instrument experts experimented with various lights and decided to make use of electric bulbs of the new gas-filled type to increase still further the efficiency of the newly equipped stations.

How Oscar Underwood Folds and Stamps a Letter

ONE of the funny sights of Washington is Senator Oscar Underwood in the act of folding up a letter. Underwood is a man greatly prejudiced in favor of neatness, not only in his personal appearance but in everything he does. He would no more be a party to a letter carelessly folded than he would wear the same collar all week. First he folds the sheet over, matches the corners right down to an infinitesimal fraction of a hair's breadth, and carefully creases the paper in the middle. Then comes the most difficult part. He must determine, just with his eye, how to make three additional folds, each one of exactly the same size. Having done that, Underwood looks at the finished product a moment to make certain it is spotless and free from the slightest imperfection. If he discovered one edge protruding even an eensy-teensy bit beyond the others it would make him unhappy. But if his workmanship seems to be all right, he carefully licks the flap of the envelope, taking pains to see that every particle of the mucilage is moistened.

He seals the envelope with great care and that brings him to the delicate task of putting on the stamp.

None of your lopsidedly stamped envelopes for Oscar. He takes enough time to insure having the stamp in perfect plumb-line with the end of the envelope—and then proceeds painstakingly to the folding of the next letter.

If he is free from interruptions Underwood can fold from 10 to 15 letters an hour. His letters are usually done up by others, however, and, in that way he gains a great deal of time for affairs of state.

Neatness is just as much a part of the Underwood make-up as his calmness. And the only thing that might ever ruffle that calmness would be a lack of neatness. Once in a while one of his office force will hurriedly crumple up a piece of waste paper and fire it at the waste basket—and miss. If Underwood happens to be at his desk and sees the piece of crumpled paper on the floor, he will quietly and unostentatiously go and pick it up and place it in the basket.

Good Hunting Ground for the Amateur Botanist

THE environs of Washington are an excellent hunting ground for the amateur botanist, for they are full of varieties of plants—trees, shrubs, wild flowers, mosses and ferns. To hold even the commonest of these varieties in one's mind is a stupendous feat, but once accomplished, it leads ever onward. Most people have a good nucleus for plant knowledge around which to accumulate more. The love of nature seems implanted within the human heart. There is no denying that things out of doors call irresistibly. And tree students, it is said, become as enthusiastic as bird students.

The streets of Washington are the rightful places for beginners. Bordering almost every capital thoroughfare is a line of trees, some common, other imported varieties. By noticing these one soon acquires a deeper interest. And then the real holidays come when the woods are sought and truly inspiring lessons are learned in the real out-of-doors of nature.

The tree families are well represented here. The deciduous varieties, meaning those which shed their leaves, are especially abundant. Of course, the oaks are in manifold numbers—the Spanish, pin, shingle, black jack, swamp white, red, black, bur, post and white. These are everywhere and they have a venerable history.

The maples have taken a hold on Washington's fancy, and elms, gums, and many less familiar trees are numerous here.

To many people the chief charm of the woods and fields lies in the multitudes of wild flowers that are to be found. Washington may deem itself fortunate in having a bountiful supply. Their names are legion, and it is an impossible task to cover the list. One of the difficulties of such a list is that many of the flowers found in the woods have escaped from some garden, and though they are found apparently uncultivated they cannot be called wild flowers; on the other hand, many of the originals of the perfected garden flowers are trailing there in their simple loveliness and the list is about evened.

Collection of Meteorites in National Museum

IN CONSIDERING the wonders of the universe, have you ever realized how conspicuous among them are the meteorites, those wonderful messages, dropped from the sky, for one to wonder at and study? They are the only material objects which come to the earth from the vast outer world.

In the collection shown in the new building of the National museum in this city is a remarkably fine exhibit of meteorites. It includes complete meteorites ranging in size from the merest pebbles to great bowlderlike masses, and casts reproducing giant forms like that of Bacubirito, which has been estimated to weigh 25 tons, and still rests where it fell in Mexico.

The National museum has recently issued a handbook and descriptive catalogue of the meteorite collection in the museum, written by Dr. George P. Merrill, head curator of geology.

Although meteorites have presumably fallen since time immemorial, a great deal of skepticism was felt at first by both the popular and scientific minds regarding the possibilities of stones falling from space. So great was this skepticism that the examples preserved in the public museums were once hidden or discarded, the custodians fearing to make laughing stocks of themselves.

PLENTY OF CHICKENS IN LONDON.

London.—Lord Selborne's advice to householders in urban areas to produce their own eggs in war time is hardly needed in the suburbs of London near and far. This year the economic policy of feeding a few "good layers" in the garden is being extensively adopted. The hen-run, however, without Chanticleer is unpopular. Profits are increased when the mother bird is allowed the joy and pride of maternity by hatching a brood of valuable chickens. The disturbance to neighbors accruing from Chanticleer's salute to the rising sun is minimized by daylight saving, which throws the risers back nearer to the dawn. It is only a sleepless Carlyle who sets the police upon Chanticleer, and the Carlyles are rare.

For administering medicine to a horse an inventor has patented a hollow, perforated bit with a funnel at one end.

REAPING HARVEST OF PEACE CLOSE TO WAR

The French have reaped a heavy harvest on the Somme, both in men and wheat. This shows them engaged in the more peaceful reaping.

FINDS BRITISH TRENCHES LAST WORD IN SKILL

Observer Says They Are Devoid of Traps for Drawing Enemy's Fire.

THINKS THE FOE UNNERVED

Condition of German Prisoners Said to Indicate That the Strain Is Telling on the Whole Army—Kindness Surprises Captives.

London.—Some new points of view are presented in the course of an article from an authoritative British source. Just what a man will see and what he is likely to feel if he visits the allied front line near the Somme at the point where the British army has just made one of its many steps forward are the writer's theme. After describing the general character of the country he recounts his progress through the communication trenches.

Walking with your head two feet under cover along a neat crack in the earth with a sharp corner every few yards, finally you turn the last corner into the actual firing trench. It is a trench to gladden the connoisseur's heart. How the men must have worked whenever they were not fighting—and is digging less dear than fighting to the soul of youth?—in order to model this perfect line of defense and offense, its shapely firing step and clean-cut verticle walls and massively squared transverses! Here is no gaping V-shaped ditch to collect the enemy's trench mortars and invite his wandering whizbangs in, and the men know it. You walk along the trench and see just pride as well as confidence in their faces.

It is noon now, and some of them are blowing on hot tea to cool it, or eating out of their dixies hot stew of meat, potatoes and peas. It has not always been thus in the English firing trench. The English only learn war in each of their wars by degrees, but now they have learned it. The day is fine, and other men are asleep, basking like cats in a state of bentitude on little sunny shelves and bunks cunningly sculptured out of the trenches' firm clay walls.

One little knot of men off duty are bending over a comic paper at a corner. The wary old trench dweller always likes a corner, because he can jump round it at the shortest notice and put a solid wall of earth between himself and anything noxious that drops in. On the other side another group cheerfully reopens that undying theme of debate the British soldiers—the merits and demerits of the salient at Ypres.

"How long was you at Wipers?"

"Four months."

"Well, I was there five months; so what right have you to speak?"

A general laugh greets this method of proof and someone else cuts in.

Sentries Watch Germans.

You meet officers anxious about nothing except to know what there is in the last English papers. Sentries on duty, with all the crowns of their grass-green steel helmets dipped cunningly down to the parapet's level, report that nothing is stirring over the way. These helmets used to be ugly and not highly protective. They looked like the barber's basin that Don Quixote took to be the helmet of Mambrino. The new make of helmet is prettier, and also more virtuous. It covers more of the neck, though not so much as the blue-steel skull caps of the French, with their turned-down brims, and its lines are artistic. Worn at the proper angle, it makes the comely young sentry look rather like Donatello's David at Florence.

With stooping heads, the sentries report "nothing doing." That means nothing visible, nothing audible.

Peering over the parapet for a moment you see only a wilderness of bare earth, pitted thickly with conical holes from three to eight feet deep. Four hundred feet away is the skeleton of a dead village. No sign of life is to be seen there except perhaps one of the larks which sing cheerfully through cannonades that would make the pheasants in faraway Sussex nervous, or else a big hawk slowly quartering around and sending the larks into a retirement as modest as that of German air men. And yet you know that that waste is infested; that you need only to raise your head a foot higher to bring a bullet dipping itself with a quiet flick into the loose earth behind you; that if you crawled out on your stomach and peeped over the edge of each shell hole you reached you would come at last to one in which men in wide-skirted gray tunics with narrow bands round their caps were crouching, some of them nursing their one good friend, a machine gun, some of them digging hard to connect hole with hole till a row of fortuitous dots is turned into a line; some of them resting tucked into little cavities scooped in the earth or near the side wall of a quarry, and staring apprehensively up at bomb-laden British biplanes wheeling about in the sky overhead as the larks in the grass look up at a hawk.

Kindness Surprises Captives.

You know all this, because on the way up this morning you talked with a number of Prussian and Saxon prisoners in one of the cages at the little camps where the latest captives rest for some days out of range of their friends' heavy guns till they can be sent by train to the base or to England. Three days ago they came down broken-hearted to the cage, their faces lined and drawn with mental overstrain, some of them still mechanically making deprecatory gestures of surrender and entreaty. As they marched today all the lines were smoothed out. They had been fed and had slept for whole nights, and had found that the "murderers" described to them by their own sergeants inflicted nothing but offers of cigarettes. So they began to expand in the unexpected sunshine of good treatment and they told what life had been like in the shellholes, its good points and its bad. The food, it had been good, but sometimes it did not come because the British guns would draw a kind of fence of falling shrapnel across a piece of country, a sort of showerbath of bullets dropping along the line, so nobody could cross the line without being hurt. Still the bread and meat and chocolate, when they did come, were good and the water was sometimes mineral water in bottles. The trouble was that the British guns would not cease firing and the British aeroplanes would not go away, nor the German ones come out of their sheds.

Sometimes the men in the shellhole would see British troops in the open within rifle range, but would not dare shoot lest British airmen should see where they were and send word to a British gun and bring down a high explosive shell on the old shellhole to bury them all alive by a second rearrangement of the earth. You perceive this apprehension just because you twice today have seen the end of a stiff black-booted leg protruding out of the wall of an old shellhole.

Other questions about their life at the front the prisoners answered as freely. Had they talked politics? Yes, there were any number of Social Democrats in the army and every one thought great changes would come when the war was over, but not now. Were there any desertions? No. Many men would be glad to be prisoners, but would not desert. Many more still would surrender if the German officers were not so quick to shoot men who put up their hands, and if all the German soldiers knew that the allies did not kill prisoners nor have them scalped by savages.

Strain on German Nerves.

Those, then, are the kind of men, and that is the kind of life and state of mind which exist beyond the 300 intervening yards of blank ground. On some early day, perhaps, an incessant sequence of separate shell bursts among and around them at intervals will change in an instant into an outburst of furious, continuous barking like suddenly angered dogs, or that of a great many suddenly angered dogs. The earth of their trench and in front of it and behind it will begin to dance up in fountains, like the surface of a puddle during a very heavy rain, only that all the earth fountains are 20 feet high. Perhaps the Germans will just be able to see through a hole in the smoke that the British parapet, where not a sign of human habitation had been seen before, bristles with men standing up at full height and then moving forward. In the next 20 minutes many capricious fates will befall individuals on both sides, but underlying this seeming confusion in the destinies of atoms causes will still be having their natural effects. The average German soldier, having endured defeat already, will fight less well than he did. His nerves having suffered the strain of those new experiences in the shellholes will hold out less long that they used to. His mind having learned that surrender into the hands of Englishmen does not mean death or ill usage, but merely release from danger and exhaustion, he will be less averse to surrender than he was.

The German army naturally scored last year by being quicker than the allies to see that success in trench warfare was to the side with the most munitions. It made competition in munition making and it has been distanced in that competition, and now the wide advancing line of English infantry will enter the German trench, a trench shattered out of shape as no allied trench ever has been shattered. Even at Verdun causes will have their effects, though sometimes it may not seem like it. However long the war may yet last it has begun to have the character of a winding up. Even a minor English attack on the short length of trench near the Somme begins to be recognizable now as one of the many forms that have to be gone through one after another in liquidating a business that is clearly bankrupt.

KAISER SWEATS AT HARVEST

Cologne Volkszeitung Tells How the Emperor Worked in Shirtsleeves With His Peasant Folk.

Amsterdam.—The story of the kaiser working in the harvest fields is told by the Cologne Volkszeitung as follows:

"Why do the people run? Why do they rush to the fields? To see the kaiser. It is between 5 and 7 in the evening. The laborers are busy loading their carts with sheaves. Suddenly all hands are idle; all caps are doffed; everybody stands aghast.

"The kaiser is coming. The 'all highest' is already on the spot! He takes off his coat! In his shirtsleeves the head of the German empire works in the field! He lends a hand to secure for himself God's golden blessing. As the kaiser does, so do the high officials and officers. And look! Do you not see our imperial chancellor working? It is true! It is he.

"With surprise the spectators behold the kaiser wiping the sweat from his brow with his sleeve. We see him sifting among the laborers drinking water from a common jug. Like a father he talks to the children. He asks them to run across the stubblefield and, laughing heartily at the enjoyment of the children, gives them little presents."

Betrothed Become Widows.

Geneva, Switzerland.—Many young women in the Duchy of Baden betrothed to officers and soldiers killed in the war have taken advantage of a recent decree of the minister of justice that gives them practically the status of widows. They have adopted the names of their dead fiances and call themselves "Mrs." They wear mourning and wedding rings and are known as war widows. They wear a headdress distinguishing them from real widows.

It is expected that this system will be extended to other German states.

Four Generations Join Church.

Spokane, Wash.—Recently members of four generations in one family joined the Fourth Presbyterian church in Spokane. The party included Mrs. Rebecca Unger, great-grandmother, her son and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. G. R. Unger, their son and wife, Mr. and Mrs. S. Melville Unger, and the little two-year-old daughter of the latter, Effie June Unger, who was dedicated in baptism.

In Japan devilfish weighing up to 200 pounds are sometimes caught.

FIELD KITCHEN ON WHEELS

Designed for Use on Border, Machine Will Cook for 100 Men—Many Being Made for Army.

Philadelphia.—A field kitchen on wheels which bakes, roasts and fries food for 100 men, having been designed for use on the border, has been completed in this city and turned over to the Baldwin Locomotive works which contracted for its construction. It complies with United States army regulations and work on others has been undertaken. The new machine has no locomotive power, but is built to be attached to a motor truck. It weighs 3,000 pounds and is constructed to use wood for fuel.

Crooks Use Poison Gas.

Albany, N. Y.—Crooks using "poison gas" cigarettes blew smoke in his face until he became dizzy and dazed, and then robbed him of $200, says Nathan Naghiygal, a shoemaker.

HAPPENINGS in the CITIES

Argentina Man Loses Pet Chameleon in Gotham

NEW YORK.—If you should happen to see a chameleon that appears to be lost wearing a gold wire about its neck, will you please notify Senor L. Q. Sediva of Buenos Aires, who is at the Majestic hotel? The chameleon, as everyone knows, changes its color regularly, according to its environment. Senor Sediva carelessly opened the little cage in which he keeps—or kept—his pet and left the room. When he returned the chameleon had left. He searched everywhere, and then telephoned wildly to the hotel clerk.

"I have lost a chameleon," he said. "Please send someone to help me find it."

"Front!" said the clerk. "The gentleman in 697 has lost a simoleon—a buck—a round iron dollar—go up and help him find it."

Two bellboys essayed the task. They found Senor Sediva, with every evidence of an exceeding grief, standing in the middle of the room. He moved carefully toward them and begged them to walk cannily, for the chameleon changes its color. The honest bell hops looked at each other. They are not students of habits of wild animals, birds or reptiles.

"It may have walked into the bathroom," suggested Senor Sediva.

"Say," muttered one of the boys, "what's this guy lost, a circus or a dollar? He talks as if he was missin' his 'flivver.'"

"He's got travelin' money," suggested the other. And then Senor Sediva said:

"It has been long a pet of mine, and was so tame and well behaved."

With one accord the bellboys went down to the office and made expressive gestures toward their craniums. The clerk himself went up and found out that it was not a dollar, but a tame chameleon that was lost.

New York Has the Only Real Chinese Vagrant

NEW YORK.—The next time you go to Chinatown if you happen to see a weather-beaten little old Chinaman with a tattered gray overcoat that almost reaches the ground, a peaked cap pulled over his eyes and shoes that make you think of Charlie Chaplin, take a good look at him. He is a character.

The policemen call him One Bum, because he is the only Chinese vagrant known to exist, but his real name is Charlie. He has been in Chinatown three years; he hasn't any home and so far as anybody knows he hasn't changed his clothes in that time. In the summer he carries the overcoat on his arm and uses it as a pillow at night. When cold weather comes One Bum sleeps over a grating on the sidewalk down on Chambers street. The warm air from the engine room rises through the cracks and if it isn't exactly cozy it is better than a cold doorway.

One winter two years ago the police thought they ought to take care of him and they persuaded him to spend a few months on Blackwell's Island. "Fine vacasche! Three meals every day; warm bed!" they told him. He unsuspiciously accepted the invitation.

Too late he discovered that he had been betrayed. They made him work. He had to push a wheelbarrow full of stone and long before his time was up he was nearly bent double doing it. "Vacasche!" he still exclaims indignantly when the policemen stop him on the street. No more vacation for him.

One Bum is different in one way from the common or Bowery variety of the species. If you give him a dime he doesn't run into the nearest saloon. He will go to one of those places where ten cents buys a square meal and coffee.

Jamaica Bay Residents Have Great Whaling Bee

NEW YORK.—A perfectly good-natured whale 65 feet long has fallen a victim of assault by swarms of amateur whalers in Jamaica bay. The whale became stranded on the reefs of Jamaica inlet, and the residents about the bay boldly assaulted the great sea animal with small-caliber rifles and hatchets. It required two hours of pounding and shooting to produce anything resembling death, and the whale was lashed to the shore with many ropes.

"It's the Bremen," said many of those who first saw the whale as it wallowed in the shallow waters.

"It's a cow," said Walter Bossard, who is the Jamaica bay marine authority. Everybody laughed until Bossard explained that he meant a cow whale. Then the armada of rowboats and launches set off. It was a merry battle. One man opened up with a 22-caliber rifle, which annoyed the whale so that she flapped her tail and upset three rowboats. The sport was safe enough, for the waters were shallow and the sandy reefs soft.

There was much argument about Jamaica bay. Everybody claimed the carcass, with its blubber, sperm and bone. The body is said to be worth a material sum, and so many persons had a hand in slaying the whale that, divided up, the sum would be insignificant.

Burglar Fishes for Plunder With a Bamboo Pole

CHICAGO.—A burglar who uses a bamboo pole 11 feet long to fish through open first-floor windows for plunder is the latest addition to methods of Chicago crookdom. George W. Skeeles, 5540 Michigan avenue, was awakened in his bedroom on the first floor to see his trousers riding on the end of the pole toward the open window. He leaped and caught and held both trousers and pole. The thief at the other end of the pole let go of it and disappeared into the night.

"It beats anything I ever heard of," Mr. Skeeles said. "I told the Fiftieth street police about it, and I have the bamboo pole here in my home if they doubt my story. I thought it a good idea to report my experience, for it may account for other first-floor burglaries.

Mr. Skeeles found a toilet article on the bedroom floor, and he said he probably was awakened when the burglar accidentally knocked it off the dresser with the end of the pole while "fishing" for loot.

Now the police are watching for the "fishing burglar."

SAWING WOOD FOR STRENGTH.

If you want to be a Samson, a Hercules or a Sandow, you should get up at five o'clock in the morning and saw a cord of wood before breakfast.

This is the advice of George D. Percy, Harvard's strong man, the Boston Post states.

"When I was a freshman in high school," the young giant said, "I found that sawing wood developed my muscles better than anything else, and as soon as I could stand that much exercise I tackled a cord every morning before I went to school."

When Percy entered high school he was what might be called a small boy, and as he unfolded the story of his physical development it became apparent that it was persistency that has developed him and crowned him the Hercules of Harvard.

As a matter of fact it has taken eight years of the hardest kind of work to bring him to his goal.

Percy is not a big fellow, but his arms and shoulders are wonderfully developed. He is twenty-one years old and weighs only 156 pounds, whereas most Harvard strong men of the past have weighed at least twenty pounds more.

NEW YORK DOESN'T WANT NEW DANCES.

New York.—The latest novelty in ballroom skill called the "Two Two," which comes from the National Association of Dancing Masters' convention in Chicago and is heralded as the terpsichorean "white hope," will find a cold welcome among the teachers who teach in New York. In fact, it is indicated that the New York teachers will reject all of the new dances that are being offered for public consumption in Chicago and will cling to the simple steps of the fox trot and one-step.

BUNCOED.

"You have been a very good boy today, James, and I'm going to let you have two helpings of dessert, as I promised I would."

"What kind of dessert is it, ma?"

"Prunes."

"Aw, shucks! I might have known there was some string to it."